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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 04742

SIPDIS

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ACTION: POL

INFO: RSO AMB DCM MEPI P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL

CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MSISON

DRAFTED: POL:BTHOMSON

CLEARED: DCM MQUINN, NEA SCARPENTER

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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INFO RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 5583

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 004742

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/22/2015

TAGS: PREL PGOV IR SY AE

SUBJECT: UAE -- DAS CARPENTER CALL AT MFA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: November 14, DAS Scott Carpenter met with MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid al Noaimi to seek UAEG views on Iran and Syria. Al Noaimi characterized Iran as a dangerous, destabilizing force in the region that needs to be treated firmly but carefully. He recommended that the USG "depersonalize" its criticism of the Tehran regime in order to garner greater support from the Iranian people. Al Noaimi admitted that engagement of Syria is not working and that the Asad regime is running out of steam. He stated that the Foundation for the Future will have a "hard time" since GCC countries perceive it as taking money from their pockets to fund the "opposition." End Summary.

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Iran )- "Dangerous and needs to be checked"

¶2. (C) DAS Carpenter inquired about Iran and how USG policies towards Iran are perceived. Al Noaimi explained that the new Iranian regime is of particular concern to the GCC. The recent elections have consolidated power in the hands of the extremists and Revolutionary Guard more than ever before, he said, and the regime clearly has ambitions beyond its borders. The UAEG is concerned that Iran is using the UAE for illegal transshipments, said Al Noaimi; "Iran is dangerous and needs to be checked." The Iranians are trying to build nuclear weapons and actively interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq and Afghanistan, he added. Iran has a long history of expansionism and hegemonic aspirations, said Al Noaimi, and asserted that it is commonly accepted in the Gulf that Iran will try to destabilize its neighbors as a tactic to increase relative power in the region.

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"Neither stick nor carrot alone"

¶3. (C) Queried about strategies to use in dealing with Iran, Al Noaimi argued that "neither stick nor carrot will work

alone." "Iran," he warned, "is a wildcat. Don't corner it because it will scratch." He characterized the Tehran regime as "Bazaaris": "You need to be serious, stiff, with no sign of inability to deal with them. They will always negotiate and make you think that every deal is the final one, but it's not true." Al Noaimi said that what is missing from the USG and from the international community is a clear, simple statement of why Iran should not have nuclear power/weapons. He noted the Iranians, claim that they have the same rights to nuclear power as India, Pakistan, or Israel, and that the argument is finding sympathy, especially among smaller countries.

¶4. (C) DAS Carpenter pointed out that the USG is not against the Iranian people, but against the regime, and inquired how USG could convey that message to the Iranians. Al Noaimi replied that as long as the attack is pointed against the Iranian President or even the regime, Iranian pride and nationalism will lead the people to take the attack personally and defend a regime that they also heavily criticize. He advised the USG to adjust its rhetoric in order to demonstrate that it is not against specific persons or a regime but against policies on principle.

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"Marriage of Convenience": Syria and Iran  
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¶5. (C) Al Noaimi admitted that engagement of SARG is not working, and that the UAEG "no longer understands" Bashar Al Asad. The Syrians think that history is with them, that they can outlast any outsiders, and that history will eventually vindicate them and their policies. DAS Carpenter inquired if SARG is taking its cues from Iran. Al Noaimi responded that it is simply "a marriage of convenience"; the two governments feel that they are being targeted and therefore are supporting each other. Al Noaimi doubted whether the regime "realizes that the longer they play with fire (cooperation with Iran and Hezbollah) the more likely they are to get burned," concluding that the Asad regime is rapidly "running out of steam."

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Forum for the Future and Civil Society  
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¶6. (C) DAS Carpenter described the November 11-12 meetings in Manama as successful and productive except for a minor problem with Egypt. Al Noaimi countered that the problem was not Egypt alone; that other countries shared Egypt's concerns. The difficulties arose from inadequate preparation. "The ideas had not cooked enough," He said. The concept papers for the Foundation and Fund reminded him of the launching of BMENA. GCC governments would be reluctant to accept a Foundation perceived as taking money from their pockets and funding hostile organizations, in essence the political opposition, he stated. "How can you ask somebody to do something they themselves do not accept?" DAS Carpenter pointed out that the Foundation and the Forum are separate and that participation in the Foundation is voluntary. He added that conflating civil society and the opposition was a vast oversimplification. Al Noaimi replied that the Foundation/Forum is perceived in the Gulf as one package: "You can't ignore the iceberg below the surface because you only see the tip." Al Noaimi said he had never heard the term "Civil Society" while studying at Tufts and Fletcher. DAS suggested that his failure to encounter the concept perhaps had to do with the fact that "in the United States one is swimming in a sea of civil society. It's literally everywhere."

7.(U) Message cleared by DAS Carpenter.  
SISON